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Language-in-education policies, immigration and social cohesion in Catalonia: the case of Vic

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This paper analyses the language-in-education policies implemented to integrate international immigrants into the Catalan language community in Vic, Catalonia. It focuses on the Catalan Government's 'Languages and Social Cohesion Plan' (LIC) plan, Vic city council's local education plans, which were adopted as part of LIC plan, and the EBE centre, a Catalan Government initiative that was opened in Vic as an educational welcome space for newly arrived immigrant families. Drawing upon empirical data gathered from semi-structured interviews and substantiated with analysis of policy documents, this paper advances three main claims. First, that immigrant families and community members in Vic have played a vital role in reinforcing the city's language-in-education policies. Second, that immigrant parents can contribute to their children's linguistic integration, even when they are not fluent in the minority language. Third, that the wider discourse of social cohesion in Catalonia has facilitated this greater participation amongst the immigrant family and community members. Together, these three claims present a counterargument to the growing belief in the literature on minority language revival and revitalisation that the family and the community no longer play a significant role in minority language maintenance.

Keywords: language-in-education policy; immigration; social cohesion; Vic; Catalan; minority languages

Introduction

Immigration is linked to globalisation and human migratory patterns on a macro scale. Nevertheless, the phenomenon also has far-reaching consequences for minority language communities even in the remotest of areas (Heugh 2013; Nelde et al. 1996; Nettle and Romaine 2000; Williams and Morris 2000). One of the direct effects of immigration on minority language communities is that it alters the role of the education system, the family and the community, three institutions that have traditionally constituted the pillars of language production and reproduction within minority language communities (Nelde et al. 1996, 6).¹ However, in spite of the pressure that immigration can put on these institutions, successes in the field of bilingual education during the second half of the twentieth century mean that the education system is often used as the main instrument in the process of integrating immigrant children into minority language communities (Turell 2001, 18). In addition, increasing emphasis is placed on the education system owing to the fact that the family and the community as pillars in minority language sustainability

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have weakened in recent decades (Baker 2003, 101; Williams 2013). Therefore, whilst the literature on language policy and planning argues that immigration can destabilise a minority language community, through careful and considerate planning in the policy field of language-in-education, immigrants may indeed strengthen and enhance the vitality of a language group or community.

Despite the fact that the education system has become a major tool in minority language reversal planning, bilingual education does not constitute a universal panacea for language planners (Baker 2003, 95). In fact, the literatures on language policy and planning and bilingual education also stress the mutual relationship between the education system, the family and the community, and the need to develop effective language-in-education policies and language teaching programmes based on this trinity (Tollefson 2002, 328; Williams 2013). In fact, there is an expansive body of literature that stresses the existence of a causal relationship between parental involvement and student educational outcomes (Hickey and De Mejía 2014; Kavanagh and Hickey 2013; Hickey 1999). Academics such as Jordon, Orozco, and Averett (2001) and Hinton (2001) also highlight the connection between parental involvement, community support and the school, and the extent to which this link is an important feature of successful immersion programmes. Such analyses of parental support and community involvement in the literature on bilingual education elucidate the role of parents and community members in language-in-education policies. Discussions in the literature on language minority revival and revitalisation also emphasise the influence of parental involvement (e.g. Fishman 1991; Nelde et al. 1996).² Nevertheless, the focus has traditionally been on those who speak the minority language or have a relatively high proficiency in the language. Subsequently, the role of the immigrant family in efforts to revitalise minority language communities has been overlooked.

The main aim of the study, therefore, is to investigate the way in which the immigrant family and members of the Catalan-speaking community are able to reinforce language-in-education policies. Concentrating specifically on Vic, a city in Catalonia, this paper aims to ascertain the relationship between the three traditional institutions in minority language sustainability by analysing Vic's language-in-education policies. Such policies are explored in relation to the wider discourse of social cohesion. Whilst it is the Catalan Government, the *Generalitat de Catalunya* that is responsible for statutory education in Catalonia, this paper evaluates the language-in-education policies implemented by both the *Generalitat* and Vic city council, the *Ajuntament de Vic*. It focuses specifically on the period of intense international immigration to Catalonia at the beginning of the twenty-first century and analyses the *Generalitat*'s 'Languages and Social Cohesion Plan' (LIC) plan, the *Ajuntament*'s local education plans '*plans educatius d'entorn*' (PEE) and the AQL EBE centre in Vic.³

The city of Vic is the administrative and demographic capital of the comarca of Osona. It is situated in the Barcelona province, approximately 70 kilometres from Catalonia's capital, Barcelona. In 2013, the city boasted a population of 41,647 (IDESCAT 2014) and has seen its population increase over the course of three decades as a result of international immigration. Owing to the fact that a large majority of its inhabitants speak Catalan as a mother tongue, it is considered a 'traditional' Catalan city. It also constitutes a stronghold for the centre-right Catalan nationalist coalition, the *Convergència i Unió* (CiU). In 2003, the municipal elections returned 10 CiU councillors, 5 PSC councillors, 4 ERC councillors, 1 PxC councillor and 1 ICV-EA councillor.⁴

Vic is a pertinent case study for evaluating the role of the family and the community in efforts to integrate immigrants for several reasons. In the first instance, the Council of

Europe (2009, 4, 7) considers Vic's intercultural city policies as an example of good practice. Policy-makers and practitioners in Catalonia also frequently cite Vic city council's language-in-education policies as examples of good practice in the fields of immigrant integration and social cohesion:

[Pupils] are distributed in the way that they don't have any school with a high percentage of students from abroad. So, that is a very good practice, really, a very good practice. And they have done a lot of activities to promote the integration, for adults and children ... The contrast is very interesting. Where people feel the most Catalan in all of the area [Catalonia], but in (*sic*) the same time, they have done a very big job helping those people to integrate. (Generalitat de Catalunya, Interview 1, 2012)

Second, Vic is also a city where a large majority of its inhabitants speak Catalan as a mother tongue. In 2011, 37,013 of its usual residents aged two and over reported that they could understand Catalan and 30,775 reported they could speak it. Furthermore, 31,780 claimed to be able to read Catalan and 25,837 able to write it (IDESCAT 2014).⁵ This sociolinguistic context means that policy-makers in Vic are able to rely on the wider Catalan-speaking community to support them in their efforts to integrate the immigrants linguistically. Therefore, analysing language-in-education policies in Vic facilitates a closer evaluation of the role of the family and the community in the formulation and implementation of language-in-education policies and allows for a greater understanding of the way in which the discourse of social cohesion has been interpreted and translated on a local level.

This paper makes valuable contributions to both the academic literatures on bilingual education and language policy and planning. In the first instance, it argues that, even when members of the immigrant family are unable to speak Catalan fluently, they are able to play a significant role in their children's linguistic integration. This is an original finding and challenges the traditional understanding of the role of the family in language revival and revitalisation, which is based on language reproduction rather than production (Nelde et al. 1996). Second, this study shows that, contrary to the belief that the family and the community are difficult audiences to reach (Baker and Jones 2000, 121; Fishman 1991, 95), it is possible to influence these two target groups through transversal policies. Third, this study shows that the long-standing principle of social cohesion in Catalonia has facilitated greater participation amongst family and community members.

The study discussed in this paper is based on a larger comparative research project that explores the way in which minority language communities are able to integrate immigrants linguistically through the statutory and non-statutory education systems. The original study involved a period of intensive empirically based research in a number of minority language communities where over 60 semi-structured interviews were conducted with politicians, policy-makers, civil society actors and language practitioners. This paper draws on data gathered and corroborated through two methods; a thematic analysis of sub-state and local policy plans, and semi-structured interviews conducted in Catalonia. In the first instance, a period of desk-based research was carried out whereby the *Generalitat's* LIC plan and the *Ajuntament's* local PEE plans were analysed thematically and patterns were identified, analysed and reported. This research formed the basis for an intensive period of fieldwork in Catalonia between December 2012 and February 2013, where over 20 semi-structured interviews were conducted with key politicians, policy-makers and civil society actors working in the field of language-in-education policy. Data collected

and analysed through these two methods are presented and discussed alongside each other throughout the paper.

Language-in-education policies and the discourse of social cohesion in context

In order to understand the current relationship between the education system, the family and the community along with the wider context for implementing language-in-education policies, it is first important to briefly analyse legislative and policy developments in the field since the end of the 1970s. This discussion will also highlight the way in which such policies have emerged alongside the development of a discourse on social cohesion.

The current context for policy-making in the field of language-in-education can be traced to constitutional and legislative developments that occurred in the years immediately following the death of General Francisco Franco in 1975. These include the restoration of the *Generalitat* in 1977, the enactment of the Spanish Constitution in 1978, the passing of the Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia in 1979 and the Linguistic Normalization Law in 1983. Together, they provide the legislative basis for present-day language-in-education policies in Catalonia.

In 1983, the Linguistic Normalization Law declared that Catalan was the medium of instruction for all levels of education (though it was expected that pupils would master both Catalan and Castilian by the end of their statutory education), that local governments were responsible for supporting the *Generalitat* in achieving its objectives, and that pupils would not be segregated in different classes or schools on the basis of language (Generalitat de Catalunya 1983, Article 1.1; 1.2. 14.1, 14.5).⁶ During the gradual restoration of Catalan in the statutory education system in the 1980s and 1990s, immigrants that had arrived in Catalonia from other parts of Spain during the 1960s and 1970s started to express the desire for their children to receive Catalan-medium education (Vila i Moreno 2004, 63). They hoped that, by learning Catalan, their children would qualify for the same employment opportunities and socio-economic benefits as native Catalan-speaking children:

So they were the first generation of immigrants from other parts of Spain, never spoke Catalan, but they realized that speaking Catalan was an added value and for their children it would be much better to know both languages for jobs or just to go up the social ladder. (Generalitat de Catalunya, Interview 1, 2012)

This reflects the larger political and social consensus in Catalonia regarding the need to establish a Catalan-medium statutory education system:

It was done with a very big consensus. Everybody agreed, even the [in-migrant] families [...] that changing the system was something to leave a way (*sic*), a previous situation that had been very very bad for everybody. So, it was like saying, well, we are going to forget about everything that we have been having (*sic*) during all of this time, so this is the modernity, this is something good. And our language that has been forbidden, even if it was not my own language, it was a richness that belonged to the society and that nobody or very few people wanted to lose. So it was something of the collectivity ... And it was also a social project. (Generalitat de Catalunya, Interview 1, 2012)

To deal with the demands of in-migrant parents and the new socio-educational context, the *Generalitat* elaborated a policy of early immersion programmes in schools with a minimum of 70% of pupils from Castilian backgrounds (Artigal 1997, 137–141).⁷

In 1993, the *Generalitat* adopted the current model of statutory education, which made Catalan the medium of instruction in primary and secondary schools in Catalonia (Vila i Moreno 2004, 71).

Therefore, by the beginning of the twenty-first century, when the rate of international immigrants arriving in Catalonia started to increase significantly, the *Generalitat* had already established that the education system was the main means of ensuring equal rights amongst Catalonia's pupils, regardless of origin and mother tongue. In addition, the process of learning and teaching Catalan was closely linked to the principle of social cohesion (Dooly and Unamuno 2009, 219). This principle offered a solid basis for the policies adopted during the dramatic demographic changes witnessed in Catalonia between 2000 and 2010 when the phenomenon of international immigration resulted in Catalonia's population increasing from 6 to 7.5 million in a period of a decade (Franco i Guillén 2011). During this decade, the percentage of international immigrants residing in Catalonia increased from 2.9% in 2000 to 15.95% in 2010 (IDESCAT 2014).⁸

In 2004, the centre-left tripartite government (PSC, ICV-EUiA and ERC) took the first significant step to integrate international immigrants by publishing a strategy that would constitute the basis for social cohesion and intercultural education in Catalonia. The LIC plan, outlined the *Generalitat's* vision for their language, education and social policies and replaced the CiU party's plan for immigrant integration (Serra Bonet 2006, 163).⁹ The LIC plan shows a clear link between social cohesion and intervention in the fields of education and language: 'It is necessary to raise awareness, promote and consolidate Catalan as the mainstay of a multilingual and intercultural education policy in order to achieve greater social cohesion' (Generalitat de Catalunya 2004, 4).¹⁰ Therefore, the tripartite government, like the CiU governments of the 1980s and 1990s perceived the education system as the principal means of promoting equal rights and adopted policies based on the principle of social cohesion:

I think that this is our [the tripartite government] contribution, social cohesion. And I think that Catalonia today is a great country due to, amongst other factors, this policy [of social cohesion]. And, this policy was seen by right parties, for example, by Jordi Pujol, and leaders of the right party, not everyone of course, but Jordi Pujol and some leaders and the left leaders. (Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya, Interview 5, 2013)

Nevertheless, the policies of the tripartite government reflected a shift in the relationship between language and integration since 1980s. For them, ability and fluency in Catalan was the result of a successful integration into Catalan society rather than 'the door' to integration (Carbonell 2004 in Vila 2011, 319). This meant that the LIC plan fostered an inclusive approach towards integration that encompassed the wider educational and Catalan-speaking community.

The LIC plan was based on three main objectives; strengthen the Catalan language, promote equal rights and encourage intercultural education (Generalitat de Catalunya 2004, 22–24). It cited that immigrant children would be integrated into Catalan society by learning Catalan and that the education system represented the main means of achieving this. It also stressed that the school constituted the initial point of contact between pupils, their immigrant families and the Catalan society:

Schools are often one of the first points of contact with Catalan society, both for the immigrant pupil and his/her family. As an educational community, the school is the gateway to our society, showing what we are and what we aim to be as a society. (2004, 3)

However, rather than placing the onus solely on immigrant pupils and their families, the LIC plan recognised that intercultural education was a challenge that involved all pupils and educational institutions:

A socially cohesive country must start by recognising that plurality is a part of all complex societies and bonds of solidarity are needed to foster democratic values in citizens who live side by side. Intercultural education then, should not be seen as a subject only to be taken up by schools with foreign pupils, but as a core element of the curricula for all pupils [...] We must henceforth promote planning in schools on educational programmes that not only tackle the challenge of intercultural education but make it a thread running through the entire approach to teaching. (Generalitat de Catalunya 2004, 12)

To ensure this in an increasingly multilingual environment, the plan stressed that members of the educational and Catalan-speaking community had an important role to play:

Building a cohesive, open society founded upon democratic values requires an education model that fosters integration and is based on coexistence and respect for diversity, and that is able to create the necessary conditions for equality. Clearly, such a task cannot be taken on by schools alone. The community at large and its institutions must work in close conjunction with the school, either through the specific local plans or on other initiatives that enhance coordination between the various educational services and stakeholders. (2004, 5)

The plan placed similar emphasis on the role of the family too, whether native, migrant or immigrant:

It is vital that the pupil's family accepts and plays a role in learning, particularly when it comes to immigrant families since many are unaware that Catalan is the language of instruction or may be unfamiliar with the aim of language immersion programmes. (2004, 6)

To reach the aims and objectives of the LIC plan, the *Generalitat* created the local education plans, PEE. The PEE plans also fostered collaboration between schools, families and the community in a number of fields (personal, social, academic and economic) and constituted a way to create an additional support system outside of the school. City councils were responsible for drafting and implementing the plans (Vila 2011, 308). In addition to the PEE plans, the LIC plan also established local committees ('serveis territorials') that encouraged city councils to create local teams and coordinators across Catalonia in order to assess local contexts, define priorities and establish measures that would reflect the needs of the local population (Generalitat de Catalunya 2004, 16).

Since the 1980s, therefore, the relationship between Catalan normalisation, social cohesion, citizenship and immigration has influenced policy discussion in Catalan society and politics. This is reflected in the approach adopted by civil society organisations:

We think that Catalan is a tool for social cohesion. For adult immigrants, Catalan is a way in which to climb the social ladder ... eh? To find skilled jobs easier ... to incorporate fully in society ... and for us, especially, it is very important that the Catalan language is the medium of instruction in schools [...] We do not want to separate children on the basis of who speaks only Spanish and who speaks Catalan and Spanish. Nobody speaks only Catalan. So it is in this sense that we say the Catalan school is social cohesion because it is what makes all young people are equal when they were in the labour market, they have equal opportunities. (own translation, Òmnium Cultural/Somescola, Interview 16, 2013)

Catalan is perceived as a way of bringing together members of Catalan society, regardless of their backgrounds:

It is very important to just keep on trying to make sure that the Catalan language, it's seen as a way of 'cohesioning' the society, making sure that it is an instrument for everyone who comes here to be part of the society so that we are not building up a two system society. We just want to be one society and we think that language here in Catalonia has this role. (Plataforma per la Llengua, Interview 2, 2012)

The discourse of social cohesion, which significantly influenced policy discussions during the 1980s and 1990s continued to play an important role at the beginning of the twenty-first century, despite a change in government. Catalan civil society organisations such as *Òmnium Cultural* and *Plataforma per la Llengua* have also adopted and articulated an approach towards immigrant integration that is based on the principle of social cohesion.

This next section will build on our understanding of the role of social cohesion in Catalan society and politics to explore the way in which Vic city council interpreted and translated this discourse during its efforts to integrate immigrants into the Catalan language community. In doing so, it will also investigate the extent to which the immigrant family and members of the Catalan-speaking community are able to reinforce measures taken in the field of language-in-education policy to integrate immigrants.

Language-in-education policies in Vic

As a result of its prosperous farming, agriculture and food industry along with construction sector, Vic was one of the first areas in Catalonia to receive international immigrants at the end of the 1990s (INE in Burchianti and Zapata-Barrero 2012, 9). In 1997, the *Ajuntament*,^{AQ2} with the support of the *Generalitat*, amalgamated four primary schools to create two larger schools. This proactive school policy, referred to as the *model Vic*, was implemented to eradicate the concentration and segregation of immigrant children at school (Simó 2011, 149). The model obliged schools to keep a quota of places for pupils of immigrant origin so as to divide pupils from different ethnic groups and nationalities as broadly as possible to avoid the phenomenon of ghettoisation (Ajuntament de Vic 2008, 5; Council of Europe 2009, 7). There was a consensus on a political and educational level regarding the need to create a new educational model:

We started [the model] because immigrants started to arrive in the city. And of all the schools, they were concentrated in two schools. We didn't want to create ghettos. So, the mayor, the council, the parent-teacher associations, everyone from the educational world were (*sic*) in accordance that we didn't want that, because it was necessary that the children that arrived here got to know the other children. (Generalitat de Catalunya, Interview 1, 2012)

Like the *Generalitat*, authorities in Vic also regarded the *model Vic* as a way in which to achieve social cohesion amongst its citizens:

Vic local authorities [...] were engaging or committed to a policy which spread every new immigrant in different schools, public and private schools, religious, and not religious. And this was done to reach a social cohesion; this was a strategy to get social cohesion. (Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya, Interview 5, 2013)

Since its creation, the *model Vic* has facilitated a more even distribution of immigrant enrolment in Vic's public and private schools (Simó 2011, 148). In light of the increased number of immigrants arriving during the 2000s, the *Ajuntament* increased the quota for immigrant pupils.¹¹ Currently, a committee comprising of head teachers and educational practitioners meet every fortnight to assign newly arrived children to schools. They take into account the pupil's level of attainment and place of residence, whether their siblings are attending a particular school and the availability of spaces (Ajuntament de Vic, Interview 11, 2013).

The educational welcome space (Espai de Benvinguda Educativa)

In 2008, with the support of Vic city council, the *Generalitat* launched the education welcome space as a pilot project for newly arrived immigrant families and their children in Vic. The *Generalitat* developed the education welcome space as an additional resource to improve the way in which newcomers were integrated in the city and chose Vic on the basis that the city council had shown commitment to the process of integrating international immigrants since the 1990s (Generalitat de Catalunya, Interview 1, 2012).¹² Similarly to the *model Vic*, the EBE centre also emerged as a response to the increase in Vic's immigrant population.

The centre represented a means to establish initial contact with the immigrant families and facilitate their long-term integration into the Catalan-speaking community of Vic. Its founding principles were stated as; consider newcomers as citizens with their own cultural backgrounds, acknowledge Catalan as the backbone of cohesion and value difference between social groups (Generalitat de Catalunya 2012, 3). Whilst participation in the centre's activities was voluntary, the *Ajuntament* encouraged immigrants to attend the centre between the time that their children were registered for public schooling and able to start at the local public school (approximately three weeks or month). As they had no prior experience of Catalan and the Catalan education system, the centre had a number of objectives; provide information and guidance on the statutory education system in Catalonia, identify the specific needs of the students (physical, emotional, psychological, cognitive and socio-economic) and promote the social integration of immigrant families through Catalan. The centre also aimed to introduce immigrants to their new linguistic, social and cultural surroundings and promote the use of Catalan through educational and cultural activities (Generalitat de Catalunya 2008, 12–13).

Between 2008 and 2010, the centre welcomed over 224 children; 110 in 2008–2009 and 114 in 2009–2010 (Simó 2011, 154). The pupils, aged between 8 and 16 years, came from countries as diverse as China, India and Ecuador (Generalitat de Catalunya 2012) and attended language classes in the centre for four hours each morning. They also participated in additional activities provided by the local council as part of the PEE plan.¹³ By introducing Catalan to pupils in a safe and supportive environment, the *Generalitat* and the *Ajuntament* expected that they would have increased linguistic ability and confidence during the first few months of their statutory education, a crucial step in the child's linguistic, social and educational integration. In addition to initiating a process of **familiarisation** with the Catalan language, culture and education system, the fact that pupils already possessed some words and phrases in Catalan on starting school also aided their new teachers:

Because here, people arrive from, I don't know, Ghana. So they have to go there [the EBE centre] at 9am. [Pointing to a piece of paper to demonstrate] This is red, this is blue. So when

they go to school, they have 3, 4, 5 words in Catalan. So it is a little bit easier for the *aulas d'acollida*. (Ajuntament de Vic, Interview 11, 2013)

It also meant that practitioners involved with the EBE project were able to identify the specific needs (linguistic, emotional, psychological, cognitive, socio-economic and physical) of new pupils and allowed them to put together a profile for those in need of additional support.

The centre also provided students aged between 16 and 18 years old with a basic introduction to Catalan and enrolled them onto an employment programme to facilitate their insertion into the workplace. For family members, the centre offered a course of 10 hours and encouraged them to participate in additional activities organised as part of the PEE plan (Generalitat de Catalunya 2008).

The PEE plans

In 2005–2006, Vic city council implemented its first PEE plan. In line with the Generalitat's LIC plan (2004), the plan aimed to promote social and cultural cohesion amongst Vic's citizens and create a collaborative network between schools and families with children. It also brought together a range of partners such as different governmental and municipal departments (education, social services and sport), advisers of the LIC plan, Parent–Teacher Associations, charities (the Red Cross, Càritas), the University of Vic and recreation and scout groups (Ajuntament de Vic 2009, 2010).

Additional PEE plans were put in place during the existence of the EBE centre. As part of the 2009–2010 and 2010–2011 plans, actors in the city organised a range of activities such as assisted studying workshops for disadvantaged pupils, family workshops (computer, cooking and theatre classes) to bring together immigrant and non-immigrant families, theatre workshops for pupils and teachers to encourage interculturalism and Catalan classes and cultural workshops based on Catalan traditions (such as the 'sardanes' dance and 'castellers', the Catalan tradition of building human towers). The PEE plans also led to the creation of a citizenship week in Vic, which saw the organisation of parallel activities in the fields of culture, leisure, education and sports (Ajuntament de Vic 2009, 2010). Therefore, the EBE centre was linked to projects that were created for all of Vic citizens and that were based on the principles of social cohesion and equal opportunity for all.

By embracing an inclusive approach towards immigrant integration that was based on both social and linguistic integration, the PEE plans created transversal links between the education system, the family and the community. This meant that less responsibility was placed on the education system as the sole institution responsible for ensuring linguistic integration and social cohesion:

I would say that the school has done everything that it can do, all the work. Now, it is important to work with the city. To continue to develop the structures put in place [...]. (own translation, Ajuntament de Vic, Interview 11, 2013)

In addition, the Generalitat's municipal education office, the *Oficina Municipal d'Escolarització* (OME), and a municipal welcome office, the *Oficina Municipal d'Acollida* (OMA), constituted two educational structures that further supported the work undertaken by the EBE centre and the PEE plans:

When they have to start the school, we make them a meeting and explain the system and then when they do go school or when they come here to inscribe we say ‘OK, you know that it is important that you speak Catalan’. And then, when they get in school, the school chooses some families that they think will need some help. (Ajuntament de Vic, Interview 11, 2013)¹⁴

In addition, the *Ajuntament* has three councillors whose responsibilities include the fostering of intercultural relations and social cohesion in addition to governance, social assistance and citizenship and education (Council of Europe 2009, 4).

Main findings

The fact that the EBE centre was a pilot project means that it is not possible to measure its long-term impact. Nevertheless, analysis of the measures implemented as part of the EBE centre between 2008 and 2010 and the PEE plans reveal important findings regarding the role of the immigrant family, the wider Catalan-speaking community in Vic and the mutual relationship between linguistic integration and the principle of social cohesion.

One of the main successes of the EBE centre was that it managed to create a supportive educational space where both children and parents started their process of integration simultaneously and in the same location. Rather than targeting parents and children separately, the *Generalitat* and the *Ajuntament* perceived parents as playing an important role in the integration of their children from the outset. Thus, they aimed to introduce all family members to the Catalan language and culture in an inclusive manner. In addition to providing them with the initial tools for their linguistic and social integration, the EBE centre helped raise awareness amongst immigrant parents of the social, linguistic and educational expectations facing both themselves and their children as newcomers in Vic.

Second, studying the work undertaken as part of the EBE centre also revealed that, contrary to Fishman’s (1991, 95) claim that families are not captive audiences as ‘there is no particular, parsimonious point of assembly where one goes to find families’, it is indeed possible to proactively reach out to families through policies. Through measures in the field of language-in-education, the *Generalitat* and the *Ajuntament* were able to influence both immigrant children and their parents:

And the boys (*sic*) arrived there and they stay during one month and then go. They learn some basic Catalan things and we start working with their families [...] And this is the thing that is the most important from the government from 2003–2007. (Ajuntament de Vic, Interview 11, 2013)

This is an original finding that offers a counterargument to Fishman’s argument and highlights the importance of the relationship between the family unit, the education system and the pupil. The OME and OMA further facilitated and reinforced the work undertaken in the EBE centre and revealed the way in which educational structures can be used in order to establish links between the community, family and the education system:

When they start at three years old, then we work with the family. We start working with the family, with the ‘serveis socials i educació’ [social and educational services] and we work with them and say, ‘OK, next year, you will start school. Do you know what it means? Because perhaps in your country the system is very very different, no? So, here we have this, we have ampas [parent-teacher associations], we have a quota, we have. ...’ [...] Now we have a new project that we put together all the places where you can learn Catalan. (Ajuntament de Vic, Interview 11, 2013)

This wider network of support, policies and mechanisms made the process of reaching a target group a much easier and realistic a task in Vic.

Third, analysis of Vic's language-in-education policies also disproves the claim advanced by academics and practitioners that the immigrant family may not have a significant role to play in the production of a minority language. According to Nelde et al. (1996, 6): 'Of course, it is self-evident, but not impossible, that the family is unlikely to play a role in language production which refers to the learning of a language by children whose parents did not speak that language'. More generally, the OECD also reports that immigrant parents may not be able to contribute towards their children's education owing to linguistic restrictions (2010, 67). This study reveals that immigrant parents, even when they are unable to speak Catalan, are able to reinforce efforts in the field of language-in-education. By fostering a positive attitude towards the Catalan language and culture and participating in social, cultural and educational activities, they are able to contribute towards efforts to promote Catalan and their children's educational success:

We want that the families understand that the school is not only for the boy (*sic*), it's for the boy (*sic*) but they have to have a part in the process [the families] [...]. Now, for example, they will start the inscription for the next year. And there are people who live here in Vic and they don't speak Catalan and they are foreigners. But perhaps they stay here from five years old. And when they have to start the school, we make them a meeting and explain the system and then when they do go school or when they come here to inscribe (*sic*) we say 'OK, you know that it is important that you speak Catalan'. (Ajuntament de Vic, Interview 11, 2013)

The success of Vic's language-in-education policies in bridging the gap between the school and the immigrant family highlights the need for policy-makers in the fields of language and education to give adequate attention to the role of the immigrant family whilst formulating integrative language-in-education policies:

The family's role, as with everything, is essential for integration. The family is where values are transmitted, is where societies are organised. The family filters what is transmitted from generation to generation. (Òmnium Cultural Osona, Interview 10, 2013)

In addition:

Adult immigrants that have children integrate much easier, because they take their children to school. One concrete thing is to help fathers and mothers of the family to learn a minimum of Catalan to be able to help their children with their homework. The family link has a role in this. (Òmnium Cultural/Somescola, Interview 16, 2013)

This perception regarding the role of the family has formed the basis of language-in-education policies in Vic.

Fourth, evaluating Vic's policies as part of the *Generalitat*'s LIC plan also revealed the importance of the wider Catalan-speaking community in efforts to integrate immigrants. The fact that the LIC plan emphasised that all members of a community were responsible for guaranteeing social cohesion meant that the activities formulated as part of Vic's PEE plan were designed with all of city's citizens in mind, not only international immigrants. Instead of placing the responsibility solely on immigrants and the education system, the projects implemented required the commitment of the wider educational community and members of Catalan-speaking community. The *Ajuntament* aimed to roll out this principle across the city, beyond educational structures: 'we have a

project which means that Vic is an educational city. So the idea is that the model Vic ... then we have to translate it in the way we live' (Ajuntament de Vic, Interview 11, 2013).^{AQ3} The approach of sharing the responsibility amongst all community members is further reflected in the implementation of transversal projects in a variety of policy fields, which includes the education system, the family and the community: 'And the policies must be inclusive, must be vertical and transversal, [they] have to touch everything, there cannot be a part that isn't included' (Òmnium Cultural Osona, Interview 10, 2013). In addition, the fact that three of the city's councillors share the responsibility of ensuring social cohesion and immigrant integration is further testament of their comprehensive approach.

Fifth, the LIC Plan, with its emphasis on enhancing and strengthening social cohesion, promoting intercultural education and the Catalan language in a multilingual framework, encouraged actors in Vic to build upon the mechanisms and strategies they had already adopted during the 1990s as part of their marked commitment to integrate immigrants. By cultivating the practical measures put in place since the development of the *model Vic* in 1997, the *Ajuntament* and the *Generalitat* embraced a holistic approach to the integration of immigrants through the PEE plans and the EBE centre. This was indeed facilitated by the principle of social cohesion that is advocated by policy actors on a local and sub-state level:

The purpose is social cohesion. That people have the opportunity to participate. Then, there are concrete objectives: the theme of the language, language as a vehicle of communication. Then, the knowledge, creating meeting spaces between people because interaction and learning go together, and then, territory, creating networks [...] We are all responsible for what Catalonia should be, we are responsible if new people come, we have to do our part of the accommodating. (own translation, Òmnium Cultural Osona, Interview 10, 2013)

This approach towards guaranteeing social cohesion, equal opportunities and intercultural education meant that EBE centre's actions were also inclusive and required engagement from a number of actors and entities in the city.

Last, the fact that three councillors oversee Vic's intercultural policies encourages collaboration between policy-makers and practitioners from different policy backgrounds. These measures reflect the way that the *Ajuntament* considers all professionals in the city as being responsible for social cohesion and interculturalism, rather than only those working directly in the field of language-in-education policy. In addition, analysis of the EBE centre reveals that it represented an extended space for collaboration between different political and social actors working towards common goals. Whilst the initiative was one that came from the *Generalitat*, during the course of its existence, the EBE centre benefited from the already existing network of actors working in the fields of education, social and integration policy in Vic. It also encouraged further collaboration between translators, cultural mediators, head teachers and teachers.

Conclusion

Studying the language-in-education policies implemented in Vic suggests that the principle of social cohesion, which played an important role during the restoration of democracy in the 1980s, also acted as a foundation for the policies adopted in reaction to the arrival of international immigrants at the beginning of the twenty-first century. As part of the wider discourse on social cohesion, the family and community are perceived as two important institutions that encourage international immigrants to use, adopt and treasure the Catalan language and culture. In addition, the fact that immigrant integration and

social cohesion is a common goal means that actors working in a range of policy fields and representing a range of entities, from educational, political, social and cultural backgrounds, are able to collaborate on measures and policies. Analysing policies and projects implemented on a local level in Vic alongside the LIC plan, which was put in place by the *Generalitat*, revealed the extent to which the wider discussion on social cohesion was interpreted and adopted on a local level.

In addition to highlighting the link between social cohesion, language-in-education policies and immigrant integration, analysis of the EBE centre led to two main findings regarding the role of the immigrant family. First, that members of the immigrant family are able to contribute towards their children's linguistic integration, even when they are not fluent in Catalan. Thus, they continue to constitute important actors in the process of minority language maintenance. Second, that it is possible to use educational structures as a means to reach out and build links with the immigrant family. The activities put in place as part of the *Ajuntament's* PEE plans also highlighted the importance of the Catalan-speaking community in supporting the process of social cohesion and facilitating linguistic integration of international immigrants. Therefore, studying the role of the community and the family in Vic's language-in-education measures and projects highlights that both continue to play valuable roles in minority language sustainability.

The measures taken in Vic reveal the importance of formulating educational projects that go beyond the classroom and suggest that the process of integrating immigrants should be tied to strategies aimed at the entire population. The study's findings also suggest that the integration of immigrant children and their families requires the establishment of links between the educational community and the wider Catalan community through the use of cultural, linguistic and social activities and coordination between local associations. Therefore, language-in-education policies should be transversal and multidimensional in order to enable the involvement of different actors and entities at various levels.

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Notes

1. Language reproduction refers to the intergenerational transmission of a minority language whilst language production refers to the learning of a language by those whose parents did not speak the language (Nelde et al. 1996, 6).
2. Whilst the literature on language minority revival and revitalisation tends to neglect the role of immigrant parents, the literature on bilingual or multilingual education explores the link between parental motivation and their role in bilingual and immersion education e.g. Baig (2001), Dagenais (2003), Kanno (2003), Norton (2001) and Torres-Guzmán (1995).
3. 'LIC' is an abbreviation of 'Pla per a la Llengua i la Cohesió Social'.
4. Accessed online: <http://www.idescat.cat/territ/BasicTerr?TC=5&V0=1&V1=08298&V3=372&V4=392&ALLINFO=TRUE&PARENT=25&CTX=B>.
5. <http://www.idescat.cat/emex/?id=082981&lang=en#h200000000040>.
6. In 1998, the *Generalitat* passed a new language law that replaced the 1983 Linguistic Normalization Law. The law states that Catalan is an essential tool to ensure social cohesion, communication and integration amongst all of Catalonia's citizens and declares anew that the Catalan is the medium of instruction for all levels of statutory education and the medium of communication for teaching and administration (Generalitat de Catalunya 1998, Preface, Article 20).

AQ4, AQ5, AQ6

7. The term ‘immersion education’ is often used to refer to the entire statutory education system in Catalonia. However, it should only be applied when referring to situations where immersion programmes or methods are adopted to teach non-Catalan-speaking pupils. Otherwise, Catalonia’s statutory education system is a Catalan-medium education (Artigal 1997, 141–143).
8. <http://www.idescat.cat/poblacioestrangera/?b=0&lang=en>.
9. The *Generalitat* drafted a second version of the LIC plan in 2007: http://www.xtec.cat/alfresco/d/d/workspace/SpacesStore/2d96e1d3-81fc-4de9-9fec-508acde1d3e/Annex1_aules_nov_09.pdf.
10. In addition to presenting the vision of the tripartite government, the plan also presented the ‘aules d’acollida’, an educational space created specifically to teach Catalan to pupils from non-Catalan homes. Generally, pupils that were unable to speak Catalan, but were preschool and primary school aged followed the immersion education programmes, whilst older pupils attended the ‘aules d’acollida’ (*Generalitat de Catalunya* 2011).
11. Like the rest of Catalonia, Vic experienced increased immigration during the early 2000s; whilst in 1998 only 3.8% of Vic’s overall population were international immigrants (INSE in Burchianti and Zapata-Barrero 2012, 9), by 2013, 25.04% of Vic’s population were international immigrants (IDESCAT 2014). Of these immigrants, 80% are from Africa, with the majority from Morocco and sub-Saharan Africa (INE in Burchianti and Zapata-Barrero 2012, 9). Furthermore, 10% of Vic’s total population are born in other Spanish autonomous communities (IDESCAT 2014): <http://www.idescat.cat/emex/?id=082981&lang=en#h20000000020>.
12. Between 2008 and 2009, the centre employed a teacher, a social worker and two practitioners responsible for social integration. The wider economic climate in Catalonia led to financial cuts and in 2009–2010, the centre employed only two people, one member of staff from the *Ajuntament* and one from the *Generalitat* (Simó 2011, 155).
13. Children aged eight years old and under were placed directly into mainstream Catalan-medium schools where they received additional linguistic support.
14. The OME requires all newcomers to Vic, regardless of their origin, to register their children for statutory education. In addition to guaranteeing a more structured approach to gathering information on pupils and their families, the OME provides advice on educational and Catalan language provision in Vic (*Ajuntament de Vic*, Interview 11, 2013). On registering at the OMA, staff identify the linguistic, financial and social needs of newcomers and advice is given accordingly (e.g. on availability of housing, employment opportunities, Catalan language courses and schools and health cards; Simó 2011, 153).

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